

## WINTER READING FOR MEN

## How to Be a Homo

A new manual provides pointers and handy checklists that help you discover if you're doing it right

by Bob Roehr

“Why do some boys turn out straight and others grow up with an innate ability to throw dinner parties?” *The Unofficial Gay Manual* poses but doesn't quite answer that question. What it does offer is a whimsical yet practical guide to Living the Lifestyle (Or at Least Appearing To).

It was born on the beach—Laguna Beach, Calif., to be exact. Kevin DiLallo and Jack Krumholtz looked at the scene, then at each other, and thought: It's exactly the same as on the East Coast. There really is a common culture.

“One of us said, somebody should write a book about that,” said DiLallo.

“I'm pretty sure it was me,” interjected Krumholtz, his partner of 11 years. “We are probably going to argue about that the rest of our lives. But I'm positive it was Kevin who said, ‘Why don't we do it.’”

So in the “Hey kids, let's put on a show!” spirit of Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney, they whipped out paper and began outlining the book amongst the pumped studmuffins of Laguna Beach.

But if you think this is the product of two

California actor/singer/dancer/model/waiter/beach bunnies, you would be wrong. For, in addition to being beach bunnies, the pair are also Washington lawyers.

Lawyer = Humor. That's not exactly the first equation that comes to most people's minds, but it works.

For DiLallo, “You really know when a subculture has evolved when they can laugh at themselves.” The pair feels the time is right for gay men to do just that.

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They offer a Guide to the Flora and Fauna of the Gay World, (Biker: “so-

prano voice forced to tenor.” A-Lister: “calluses from social climbing.”)

And they deconstruct the language of personals ads. “Professional: Has a job. Versatile: Is a bottom. Straight acting: Don't call him at work.”

In one section they conduct an anthropological dig through a man's gym bag, in another they identify key decorative motifs for each room of the house.

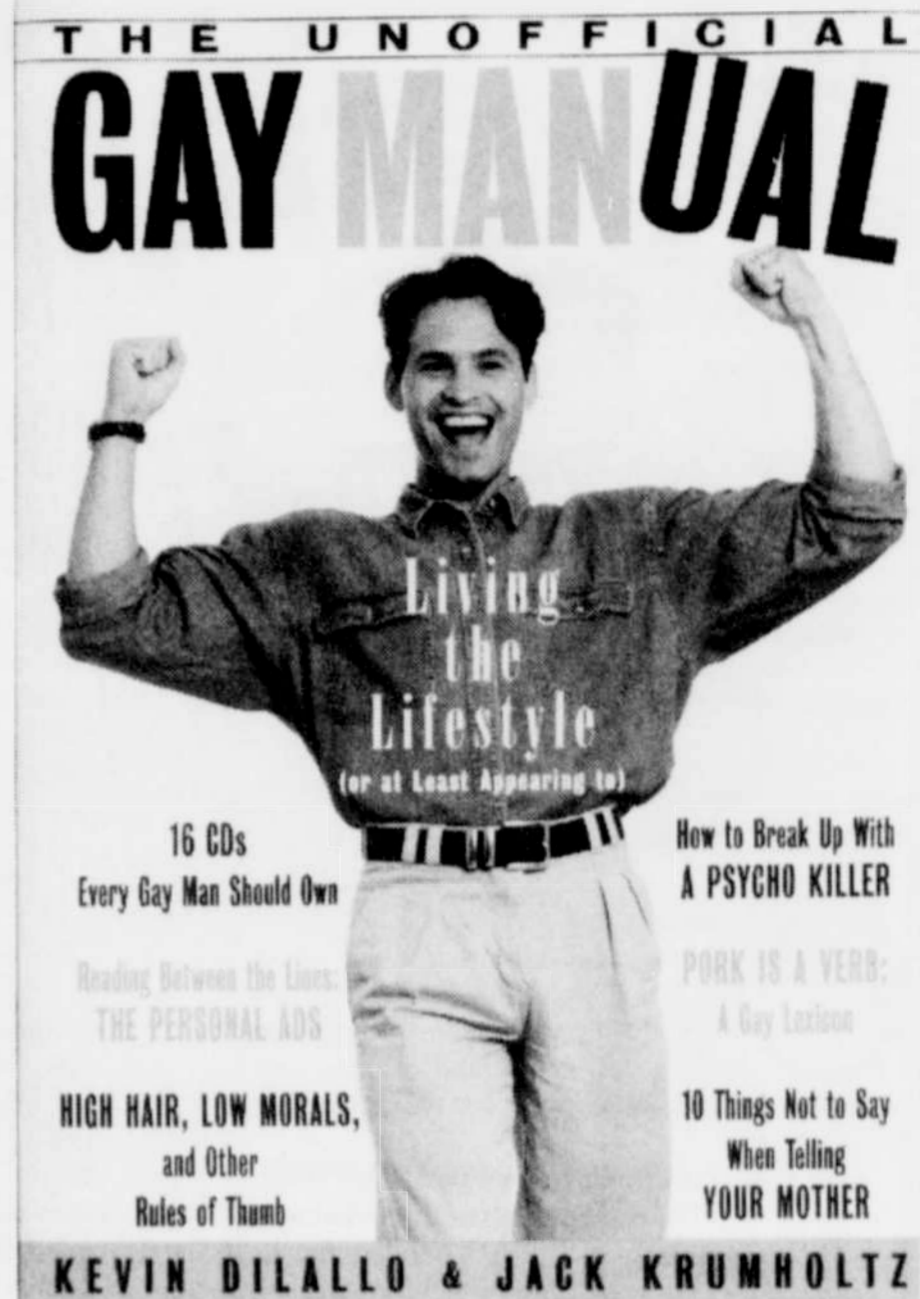
“How can you tell he's the one?” queries a checklist. “Kissing in an elevator,” said Krumholtz. “I always equate that moment or that experience with sort of how I really knew I wasn't going down the wrong path with Kevin.”

“For me it's finding excuses to call at all hours. When we moved away from each other [to go to law school in separate cities] we called four, five, six times a day,” said DiLallo. They still call each other several times a day at work even though they live together.

Someone just coming out will appreciate the very practical, down-to-earth, first sections of the guide—but perhaps not catch all of the humor. The more jaded among us will recognize the stereotypes and smile at the digs. All can enjoy the cornucopia of gay lists, trivia, organizations and places to shop or party that are laced throughout the book.

“We tried to make it something that people at different stages would appreciate because, my god, I've been out forever,” DiLallo effused.

Krumholtz had never formally talked with his parents about being gay, even though they had often met his lover over the years he and DiLallo have spent together. “The book forced the issue for



me,” he said.

His parents were great about it.

“I told you so,” muttered DiLallo, half under his breath.

## Fiction

**Black Glass**, by Stuart Edelson. Dimi Press, 1993; \$19.95. A sailor, serving on a merchant ship delivering supplies during the Vietnam War, falls in love with another sailor.

**Nightswimmer**, by Joseph Olshan. Simon and Schuster, 1994; \$20. A man haunted by the memory of his first lover, who apparently drowned 10 years before, is captivated by a new man who arouses memories of the presumed dead lover. A story about the almost haunting pain of lost love.

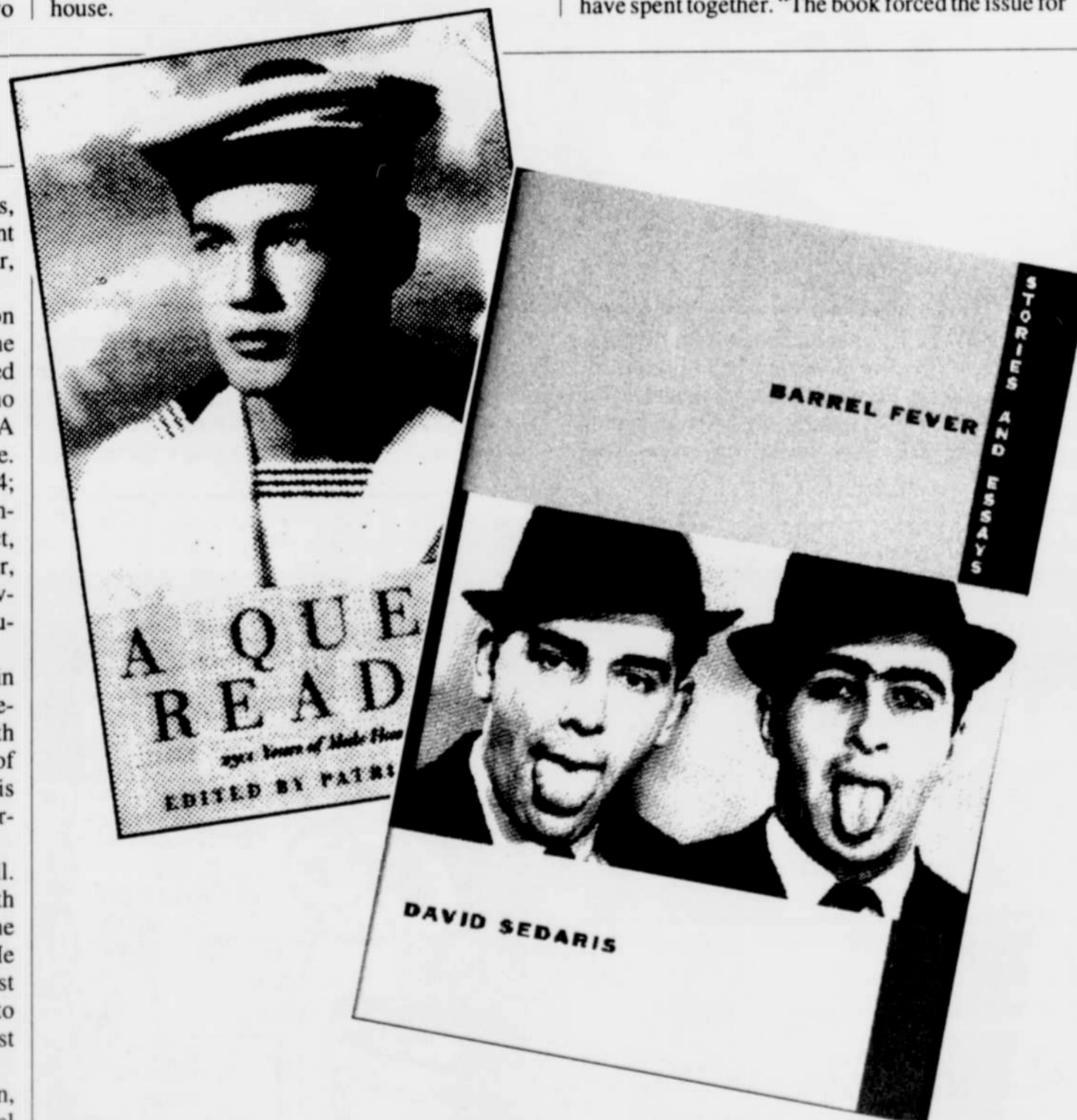
**User**, by Bruce Benderson. Dutton, 1994; \$19.95. An all-too realistic venture into the underworld of drugs and hustling. A heroin addict, who has nearly killed a porn theater bouncer, knows his days are numbered—and so does everyone else in this world of addiction, prostitution and street machismo.

**Winter Birds**, by Jim Grimsley. Algonquin Books, 1994; \$18.95. This first book in a somewhat autobiographical trilogy is set in North Carolina and covers the early years in the life of a young hemophiliac. His alcoholic father is abusive in every way possible. His life, impoverished.

**Home for the Day**, by Anderson Ferrell. Knopf, 1994; \$20. A man from the rural South returns, with his deceased lover's remains, to the home from which he escaped years before. He secretly inter the remains in the place most forbidden to him. A year later he must return to that place. Helpless to do otherwise, he must reveal his secret deed. A sweet, gentle novel.

**Barrel Fever**, by David Sedaris. Little Brown, 1994; \$19.95. A collection of stories by National Public Radio's house-cleaning commentator. A look at ordinary lives that is touching and yet cutting. Several gay-related stories.

**Living Upstairs**, by Joseph Hansen. Plume,



1994; \$9.95. A coming-of-age story set in 1940s Hollywood. The struggles of a young gay man working to make a living while writing his first novel and trying to make sense of his love for a

Texan with too many secrets. Danger and betrayal await him.

**A Queer Reader, 2500 Years of Male Homosexuality**, edited by Patrick Higgins. New

Press, 1994; \$25. An extraordinary collection of writings by authors ranging from Plato to Warhol. Sources include sonnets by Michelangelo and a *Playboy* interview with David Bowie. An interesting blend of novels, biographies and histories.

## Biography

**John Maynard Keynes**, by Jeffrey Escoffier. Chelsea House, 1994; \$9.95. The story of the famous English economist, this book is part of a series for young adults entitled “Lives of Gay Men and Lesbians.”

**Modern Nature**, by Derek Jarman. Overlook, 1994; \$24.95. The final book in Jarman's autobiographical trilogy. This volume chronicles the filmmaker's battle with AIDS and his attempts to reconcile art, family and friends with this battle. He reminisces about his childhood, his coming out, and his work in films.

**Dharma Lion**, by Michael Schumacher. St. Martin's Press, 1994; \$18.95. A biography of Allen Ginsberg, the Beat Generation poet who seems to have participated in every popular movement since the end of World War II.

## AIDS

**AIDS and the Arrows of Pestilence**, by Charles Clark. Fulcrum Publishing, 1994; \$23.95. Clark's premise is that AIDS is but the most recent of humanity's plagues, and—like the others—it exists because cultural trends provided the opportunity for it to establish and grow. To halt this disease governments must address the issues of medical care, welfare, drug legalization, and discrimination, among others.

Compiled by Kristine Chatwood